



**A few words
from State
Superintendent
of Schools
Lillian M.
Lowery**

Maryland educators have a few more days to complete their TELL Maryland Surveys. The Governor's office has extended the deadline for response until Monday, March 11.

We know that your efforts are making a tremendous difference, as nearly three out of every four schools statewide are closing in on a 50 percent return rate. Special thanks go to Caroline, Charles, Garrett, Queen Anne's, Talbot, and Worcester Counties. Every school in these systems has surpassed the 50 percent threshold.

More systems can join that list. All teachers and administrators should get involved. Check out www.tellmaryland.org, and complete this brief but important survey.

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Our wonderful Maryland Teacher of the Year, Rhonda Blankenship, joined the State Board last week to describe her whirlwind life in the wake of her honor.

Rhonda, an English/Language Arts teacher at Rising Sun High School in Cecil County, is one of four finalists for the national honor. She's competing this week in Washington, DC, for the national honor.



Typical of Rhonda – and of most educators I know – she deflected the praise. She thanked her students, her school administration, her system administration, and everyone who had supported her through this year and throughout her career.

Rhonda
Blankenship

MARYLAND LEADS NATION IN AP SUCCESS YET AGAIN

Maryland students have achieved yet another number one national ranking in Advanced Placement (AP) success. In fact, the College Board says Maryland's winning streak in the rigorous national exams is longer than previously reported.



Thomas Gillin (left), Senior Education Manager with the College Board; Robert Alig, College Board Regional Vice President; and Maryland Assistant State Superintendent Henry Johnson review AP data with the State Board.

The percentage of Maryland seniors who earned a score of 3 or higher on one or more AP exams reached 29.6 in 2012, the highest percentage in the nation and an increase over the 27.9 percent tallied in 2011, according to the College Board's "Annual AP Report to the Nation," released last month. A score of 3 or better is the threshold at which many higher education institutions award college credit for high school students in an AP assessment.

The College Board said this was the seventh consecutive year that Maryland has led the nation in AP success. Last year, College Board data determined that Maryland led the nation for the fourth consecutive year, but a review of revised state enrollment data from the past decade caused the organization to recalculate its findings.

College Board representatives met with the Maryland State Board of Education last week to analyze the data, joined by a room filled with AP students. There was much to celebrate, but the gathering was about more than celebration.

"I know there is still work to be done; Dr. Lowery has made it abundantly clear," said Robert Alig, College Board regional vice president. "Nobody is satisfied

Everyone says this, but in Rhonda's case it is absolutely true: no matter what happens during this week's interview process, she is already a winner. She represents our schools and our teachers in the very best way.

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Two Maryland schools and one school system have been nominated for the U.S. Department of Education's 2013 Green Ribbon Schools Award.

Cedar Grove Elementary and Summit Hall Elementary – both in Montgomery County – and Montgomery County itself, are all up for recognition this year. All applications for the award were evaluated by a committee comprised of staff from State and national agencies, State and regional environmental organizations, and private businesses.

Federal officials will recognize schools and systems that save energy, reduce costs, feature sustainable learning spaces, protect health, foster wellness, and offer environmental education to boost achievement. Winners are scheduled to be announced on Earth Day, April 22. Good luck to Cedar Grove, Summit Hall, and Montgomery County itself in this year's competition!

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Please join me in welcoming a new member to our team at the Maryland State Department of Education: Penelope Thornton Talley, Esq.

Ms. Talley joins our staff as Chief Performance Officer. She will provide leadership, guidance, administration, and supervision to MSDE's monitoring and support activities. She comes to MSDE from the Deputy Mayor for Education's Office in Washington, DC, where she served as Interim Chief of Staff/Deputy Chief of Staff since last year. At MSDE, she replaces Deputy State Superintendent John Smeallie, who recently joined the staff at Towson University.

Prior to joining the Washington, DC, government, Ms. Talley spent nearly a decade with AARP, where she was Senior Vice President for Operations and Support Services. She also serves as an adjunct faculty member at the University of Maryland-University College.

Ms. Talley holds a bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a law degree from the University of Richmond, and an MBA from the Johns Hopkins University.

Welcome, Ms. Talley!

with Maryland's performance."

Governor Martin O'Malley, in a prepared statement, complimented those involved with Maryland's continued success.

"Because of the better choices we've made together to invest in our children's future, we've built the number one public schools in the nation," Governor O'Malley said. "Thanks to our hardworking students, our dedicated educators and our outstanding parents, Maryland's high school students have achieved the nation's best performance on AP exams for seven years in a row - outperforming their peers and gaining the skills they need to learn, earn, and grow in the future."

The percentage of Maryland graduates scoring a 3 or better on the exams has nearly doubled in the past decade. In 2002, 16.5 percent of Maryland's graduating seniors received at least a 3 on an AP exam.

Maryland placed second to Florida in the total percentage of seniors completing an AP exam (48.2 percent to Florida's 52.9). The percentage of Maryland seniors taking an AP exam stood at just 23.6 for the class of 2002.

The Maryland State Department of Education has worked in close partnership with the College Board to strengthen the AP program by increasing access to all students - especially to students from under-represented groups. The program also has provided ongoing professional development to teachers, school counselors, and administrators. The effort has paid enormous dividends: all 24 Maryland school systems have at least 20 percent participation rate among high school seniors, and 16 districts have 30 percent or greater.

There remain stubborn gaps in both achievement and participation, but both African American and Hispanic students have been making significant progress in the test. Both the State Board and Dr. Lowery have targeted this as an area in need of continued improvement.

The College Board's Advanced Placement Program, which began in 1955, allows students to pursue college-level studies while still in high school. Students of different interests and backgrounds can choose from more than 30 courses to demonstrate their knowledge of rigorous academic curriculum. Complete results are available at

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Calendar

March 4-8 – School Breakfast Week

March 28 – Maryland State Board of Education Meeting

April 8 – General Assembly Session Ends



VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS

Maryland Meals for Achievement

February 27, 2013

The Governor and State Schools Superintendent Lillian Lowery celebrate the success of Maryland Meals for Achievement at Eastport Elementary in Annapolis; specifically, the move of breakfast from the cafeteria to the classroom!.

The Judy Center at Moravia Park ES

February 6, 2013

Maryland Schools Superintendent Lillian Lowery visits the Judy Center at Moravia Park Elementary School in Baltimore City. Two dozen Judy Centers across the state provide an array of services to Title I communities, to make sure children enter school ready to learn.

In the News

Federal Budget Sequestration Would Hit Schools Hard
WBAL Television

Challenging Young Minds
Baltimore Sun

The Value of Public Education
Carroll County Times

<http://apreport.collegeboard.org>.

GOVERNOR, STATE SUPERINTENDENT PUT FOCUS ON CHILDHOOD HUNGER

Governor Martin O'Malley and State Superintendent Lillian Lowery last week joined other leaders and advocates in an event targeting better nutrition for school children.



Governor O'Malley and State Superintendent Lowery congratulate some of the student performers at Eastport Elementary School last week.

Share Our Strength's "No Kid Hungry" Campaign, together with the Partnership to End Childhood Hunger, joined students at Eastport Elementary School in Anne Arundel County to spotlight the importance of proper nutrition in improving student achievement. Governor O'Malley and

House Speaker Michael Busch are hopeful that the Maryland General Assembly will approve additional funds for the Maryland Meals for Achievement program, which provides school breakfasts to thousands of Maryland children.

"Our State will be the first one to end childhood hunger," Governor O'Malley said. "Better choices mean better results."

Share Our Strength Executive Director Tom Nelson said that providing access to healthy school breakfasts can dramatically impact academic, health, and economic futures. Citing a report released by Share Our Strength and developed in partnership with Deloitte, found that if 70 percent of elementary and middle school students who qualified for free or reduced lunch would also receive breakfast, there would be nearly 50,000 fewer absences, 32,000 improved math assessments, and nearly 8,000 more high school graduates.

For more information, see www.NoKidHungry.org/Breakfast.

Governor Pushes for More School Breakfast
Funding

Annapolis Capital

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2013 Education Bulletin.

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The Maryland Education Bulletin is Published by:

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A Publication of the Division of Academic Policy

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MSDE Videos: <http://www.MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/newsroom/videos>

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